

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SCCT-01 SY-04 AID-05 EB-07 AF-04

CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-03 H-01 INR-05 L-02 NSAE-00 NSC-05

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R 201505Z DEC 74

FM AMEMBASSY TUNIS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7765

INFO AMEMBASSY ALGIERS

AMEMBASSY TRIPOLI

C O N F I D E N T I A L TUNIS 7813

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, PINS, LY, TS

SUBJ: TRIAL OF LIBYAN SUPPORTED SUBVERSIVES

1. FROM DECEMBER 14 TO 18, GOT CONDUCTED TRIAL OF 33 SUBVERSIVES WHO HAD BEEN ACCUSED OF PLOTTING AIRPLANE HIJACKINGS AND BOMBINGS IN TUNISIA WITH AID AND SUPPORT OF A NEIGHBORING STATE. OF THE 33, 22 WERE ACTUALLY HELD BY GOT WHILE THE REST WERE TRIED IN ABSENTIA. TRIAL, HELD IN A "CORRECTIONAL COURT" IN TUNIS, ENDED WITH THE CONVICTION OF ALL. HEAVIEST SENTENCE ANNOUNCED THUS FAR IS SIX YEARS IMPRISONMENT: MOST SENTENCES ARE TWO TO FOUR YEARS. TRIAL HAS ATTRACTED PRACTICALLY NO ATTENTION IN TUNISIAN POLITICAL CIRCLES IN CONTRAST TO TRIAL OF STUDENT SUBVERSIVES IN STATE SECURITY COURT LAST AUGUST. ONLY INCIDENT WORTH OF NOTE DURING TRIAL WAS EXPULSION OF ONE DEFENDANT FROM COURT ROOM WHEN HE REFUSED TO STOP CALLING PRESIDING JUDGE "BROTHER PRESIDENT".

2. THE THIRTY THREE ACCUSED ARE GROUP OF YOUSSEFISTS AND BAATHISTS BASED IN LIBYA, LED BY TUNISIAN DISSIDENT MOSTARI BEN SAID, AND SUPPORTED BY LIBYAN GOVERNMENT.

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PRESS ARTICLES ON TRIAL GAVE DETAILS OF CHARGES AGAINST

ACCUSED LINKING THEM WITH LIBYA. GOT APPEARS TO HAVE ARRESTED A FEW AND UNCOVERED REST VIA INTERROGATION. TERRORIST ACTION IN TUNISIA APPARENTLY GOT NOT FURTHER THAN PLANNING STAGE. PRESS REPORTS CLAIMED THAT EXPLOSIVES WERE FOUND BY POLICE, BUT ONE SOURCE HAS TOLD US THAT NO WEAPONS OR EXPLOSIVES WERE IN FACT CAPTURED.

3. GOT HAS HANDLED INCIDENT IN LOW KEY, REMANDING ACCUSED TO LOW LEVEL OF JUDICIARY NORMALLY RESERVED FOR MINOR OFFENSES RATHER THAN TO STATE SECURITY COURT USED LAST AUGUST FOR TRIAL OF STUDENT SUBVERSIVES (SEE TUNIS 5255). ALSO, TUNISIAN NON-OFFICIAL POLITICAL CIRCLE HAVE APPARENTLY GIVEN LITTLE IMPORTANCE TO THIS CASE AND THE ACCUSED HAVE ENJOYED NONE OF THE MORAL AND LEGAL SUPPORT GIVEN BY DISSIDENT LIBERAL GROUPS TO STUDENTS TRIED IN AUGUST. DESPITE THE GOT'S LOW KEY PUBLIC HANDLING OF THIS CASE, THE LIBYAN CONNECTION HAS NEVERTHELESS CAUSED DEEP CONCERN (SEE TUNIS 7659) AT HIGH LEVEL IN GOVERNMENT.

SEELYE

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